EXPOSITORY TEXT AND ELEMENTARY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON STANDARDIZED TESTS
by
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Abstract

From 1989 to 2008, students in fourth grade in Michigan scored lower on expository text selections of standardized testing as compared to the narrative text selections. This literature review examines factors that impact informational text achievement for elementary students given the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test. The review also identifies several techniques that are successful in raising informational text achievement. Recommendations are made to improve informational text assessment preparation for elementary aged students.
Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of Problem

There has been a gap in achievement on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) English Language Arts (ELA) test at the elementary level. Student achievement on the narrative text section is greater than achievement on the expository text section. The ELA portion of the MEAP test includes two areas to be combined together to get the cumulative score: narrative text reading selection, expository text reading selection. The writing portion of the ELA test spans across both the narrative and expository text and also has a topical essay performed by the students. Reading comprehension is also measured using the informational and narrative text selections. When analyzing the narrative and expository text scores it is apparent that there is markedly lower achievement with the expository text portion of the achievement test. Data dating back to the 1989 shows consistently lower achievement on expository text measures than that of narrative text.

State of Michigan MEAP results are available showing the differences at the elementary level (See table 1). The years 2003 and 2004 the MEAP test altered the way they assessed reading. Prior to 2003, Informational text assessment was tested equally with the narrative text. After 2004, the MEAP test began to alternate test weighting year to year. Informational text and Narrative text selections continued to be offered, however, the frequency of questions was alternated each year. It is markedly more difficult to compare the achievement on the two selections due to the lower sample size. The number of items tested post-2004 is subscripted in Table 1.
Table 1: Student Achievement: Narrative versus Informational Text Selection MEAP Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Informational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>76.3</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>69.5\textsubscript{6}</td>
<td>67.8\textsubscript{6}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STATE OF MICHIGAN DATA

Research Question(s)

The purpose of this literature review is to describe the factors that impact elementary students’ achievement on expository text measures. The research question is: What are the factors that impact achievement for expository text measures in third through sixth grades?

Definition of Terms

Basal: basic, fundamental (Webster's New World Dictionary, 2003). A basal text is a fundamental reading text that is traditionally used in elementary grades as the main tool for instructing reading.

Causality: cause and effect (Webster's New World Dictionary, 2003). Causality is used in science instruction to indicate that an event is the cause of a subsequent adjacent event.

Compare-contrast: compare - to examine (two or more objects, ideas, people, etc.) in order to note similarities and differences; to compare two pieces of literary work (Webster's New World Dictionary, 2003): contrast - to compare in order to show unlikeness or differences; note the opposite natures, purposes, etc.(Webster's New World Dictionary, 2003). Compare-contrast
is usually associated with a graphic organizer to help students define attributes of subjects to be compared.

Content: Substance; meaning (Webster's New World Dictionary, 2003), represents information that is reflected through text.

Expository: as of or containing exposition; explanatory (Webster's New World Dictionary, 2003). Subsequently, expository text is text that explains things. The Michigan Educational Assessment Program uses the terms informational text to title reading selections that explain things or put forth information. For the purposes of this paper expository and informational are synonymous with one another. The term expository is the term generally used more frequently in research of this topic.
Chapter II: Review of Literature

Narrative versus Expository Text

*Scarcity of Informational Texts*

Duke (2000) conducted a study of informational text experiences in 20 first grade classrooms and concluded that there was a scarcity of informational text in the classroom environments. The study selected classrooms from very low and very high SES school districts. Classrooms were visited four times throughout the school year. Each visit collected two types of data. First, the quality and types of text read and studied during the observation. Second, what types of text were displayed throughout the room, in the classroom library, and present in the instructional session? Results indicated a mean of 3.6 minutes per day spent on informational texts occurred during written language activities. Duke also found that there was an even greater discrepancy between low and high-SES school districts. The lower-SES districts had fewer informational texts in already smaller libraries. The mean time spent in lower-SES districts with informational texts was 1.9 minutes. Further, over half of the lower income classrooms not spending anytime on informational texts (Duke, 2000). Duke concluded classroom instruction needs to include a well-balanced offering for narrative as well as expository text.

*The Importance of Early Acquisition of Informational Text*

Early literacy development and informational text literacy happens when young children experience and explore texts. Active participation in text experiences and interactions with more able peers or adults provide opportunities for children to learn about the forms and functions of these texts (Vygotsky, 1978). Both their writing and their reading experiences help them
construct an understanding that written texts represent ideas (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Research established connections between young children's exposure to, and repeated experiences with, stories and their literacy development (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). It is not clear, however, whether an automatic transfer occurs between children's emerging understanding of narrative structure in the form of stories and their understanding of informational books, particularly nonfiction texts. Informational texts focus on descriptions, comparisons, persuasion, and other structures that may not be as familiar to young children that have been raised hearing stories. The impact of experiences with different types of texts and young children's developing understandings about how these types of texts function is not entirely known, either (Walker, Kragler, Martin, & Arnett, 2003).

Walker conducted research with a first grade classroom in a small Midwest U.S. city. The school had 250 students and was located in a middle-to-high socioeconomic status (SES) part of a city located near a university. The first grade class, consisting of eight girls and eight boys with twelve white students, three students from the country of India, and one African American student all participated.

Students participated in an integrated content area unit focusing on bugs that utilized informational texts. Informational texts were used for shared reading and cooperative reading experiences. Activities were based on state directed first grade literacy standards. Accessing prior knowledge of content area information was one state-standard that was being utilized. Three university instructors, with the assistance of the instructor gave the children opportunities to practice in small groups the strategies and approaches that they were taught during instruction. They collected student data from observations, children’s journals and writings. The children
were very willing participants and only struggled with writing connected text. The children openly discussed the informational text and participated in read-alouds. Activities including compare-contrast, charting information, and text mapping were also used during the experiment.

The instruction focused on introducing the text before reading it and giving some of the elements and specific aspects of it. Throughout the lesson it appeared that the students wanted to actively participate but struggled with understanding the text, strategy to read the text, and the activity as a whole. Walking the students through several tasks including whole group and small group activities, the students began to pick up patterns of text and develop a genuine interest in reading for information. The researcher added, however, that the children still struggled with connected writing (Walker, Kragler, Martin, & Arnett, 2003).

Walker believed that this first grade was very typical of primary-aged students. They found that the children quite obviously lacked previous exposure to informational texts (Walker, Kragler, Martin, & Arnett, 2003). The children were able, over a very short period of time, to incorporate some of the learned strategies in their reading. It was the thought of the researcher that had the children been exposed to informational texts as early as kindergarten, they would have been more than able to actively participate in the activities and strategies to comprehend and organize information from the text.

Speaking to the teacher revealed that because of time constraints they did not have adequate time to further explore informational texts. Walker (2003) contends that without more time spent on exploring informational texts, the students may fail at an early age to acquire the necessary skills to gain an understanding on information/expository text.
Comprehension of Narrative and Expository Texts

(Best, Floyd, & Mcnamara, 2008) explored third grade students to determine reading comprehension of narrative and expository text, comprehension of each text was assessed with a free recall prompt, three cued responses and a series of multiple choice questions. A Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement was also used to determine the students decoding skills as well as their access to world knowledge. This exercise revealed that comprehension was better for the narrative text than it was for the expository text. It also appeared that the competence of the reader rested in the type of text they were reading. It further proved that comprehension of the narrative text was directly related to the decoding skills of the student. Comprehension of the expository text was directly related to and influenced by the student’s world knowledge.

Reading comprehension, for years, has been one of the leading topics of researchers seeking to discover the keys leading to learning. The approach to teach comprehension using strategies and content are not new. A research study to determine the validity of these methodologies was performed over two years with the use of fifth graders from a poor urban school district (McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009). This school was targeted as “in need of improvement” by the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment. The school achieved 48% on the fifth grade state reading test. The majority of the students were African American (58%) and 49% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

To help determine whether students performed better based on content instruction or strategies instruction, students were taught two different ways. Content instruction focused on text through open, meaning-based questions about the text. The strategies instruction was based on taught procedures to guide them through the text. In this project, a control group was guided through a basal text and was asked questions from the teacher’s edition. Three assessments were
given to the students to measure student’s ability to transfer information to knowledge. Results were consistent from year one to year two. There was a difference between the groups. The students that were taught content outperformed the students that were taught strategy. The length of question responses was greater from the content taught students (McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009).

_Comprehension Data_

(Gillam, Fargo, & Robertson, 2009) stated that examining expository text can be done in many ways. Their research study examined the insights gained from think aloud data. Data was gathered by taking statements from students with and without language impairments. Forty 4th grade children from two counties in Alabama were asked to participate. The only students that participated were approved to do so by heir parent and were required to take The Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF) test and the Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (TONI) to determine current educational standing at the time of testing. The participants took part in individual think-aloud sessions which means to verbalize thoughts aloud and a verbal working memory task. During the sessions the students were asked to listen to an expository passage one sentence at a time and make a comment after each sentence and then answer questions and recall the passage. Their answers were coded and analyzed. The results suggested that the ability to paraphrase the passage after hearing it read and commenting on it was closely related to comprehension text measures. Verbal recall activities with young students help the student understand the instructional expectations of the teacher. It also communicates a genuine interest in the students to perform (Gillam, Fargo, & Robertson, 2009).
Teaching Expository Text

Teaching students to use expository text at a young age helps prepare them for their future education. Society is becoming more and more entrenched in the gathering of knowledge at a high rate. Students will be encountering more and more information from texts as their schooling goes on (Caswell & Duke, 1998). Students will learn more about their world the more expository text they read. Students are naturally curious about their world. Expository text can bridge the gap between the student and the disciplines of science, social studies, health, to name a few. Expository text can create a desire within the child to study areas that are interesting to them.

Content Area Instruction

Content area instruction is the root of teaching expository text. Expository text is, by nature, text interspersed with content. One such curricular domain is science. Without introducing ways to teach science information to children it becomes nothing more than simply reading text. Students at a young age need to be taught how to read for information. Students at a very young age can be taught methods to comprehend expository text. Compare-contrast is one such way to teach for content. In a study on training student how to comprehend in content area instruction, researchers took 215 second grade students (7-8 years old) from 4 schools with 14 teachers and randomly assigned to treatment. The treatment consisted of instruction based on the structure of compare-contrast expository text, emphasizing clue words, generic questions, graphic organizers, and close analysis of well-structured text exemplars (Williams, Stafford, Lauer, Hall, & Pollini, 2009). Their program was compared with a program that focused on the science content but had no compare-contrast training and there was no instruction control. The
treatment program led to better performance on written and oral tests than the control group. These results mirrored previous projects that determined that students at primary school age can acquire comprehension skills for expository text (Williams, Stafford, Lauer, Hall, & Pollini, 2009).

(Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005) research found that teaching young children text structure to help them learn to read expository text can most effectively begin at the primary level. An expository text comprehension investigation looked at second students during their guided reading period. The participants included 72 second graders in six different classrooms. The students were organized in four different guided reading groups. Each group had 24 students in it. The six classes were randomly assigned to three different groups: text structure, content, and no special instruction. The text structure group focused on text structure awareness. The content group focused on background knowledge and vocabulary, and the no instructional group carried out their regular instruction. The findings pointed out that text structure is an effective way to teach expository text and for promoting expository text comprehension. Well-structured text aids the students in thier acquisition of knowledge and build their comprehension (Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005).

**Instructional Aids**

Devices that teachers use to help visually show and represent content add greatly to the experience of the learner. Venn diagrams are one such tool that helps student compare-contrast content. Other structured learning tools such as story-mapping gives student a visual representation of text. Boon and Stagliano used a story-mapping scenario with three 4th grade students’ learning disabilities. The students were individually instructed on the common
elements of story and were taught how to complete a story map. Each student was then asked to complete a story map while reading an expository text selection. They were then asked to do five comprehension questions regarding the selection. The results of the questions revealed that all three participants improved their percentage of correct comprehension questions. Further testing on later passages also indicated that even when a story map was not used, percentage correct remained at a higher level than before the story map intervention. (Boon & Stagliano, 2009).

A concept map is another device used in a research project to show improvement in comprehension on science tests. (Oliver, 2009) focused on creating a concept map to study soil conservation. The study was predominately qualitative. The researcher participated while compiling observations. Students from a southern United States suburban middle school were trained using Cmap Tools, concept mapping software, during two 45 minute classes. The two day training included the students creating a personality concept map on the first day and a concept map similar to the one they will be using during the study. Seventy-four sixth grade students read a 900 word textbook chapter on soil conservation in their classroom. Students then were given two 45 minute class periods to map 24 pre-selected terms from the textbook in the computer lab. They were given a text map with four key terms and twenty-four unsorted concepts. Researcher field notes, teacher interviews, student-created concept maps, and a student survey were used to determine that students were more successful at mapping terms than they were at mapping concepts. The research also revealed that there were no significant differences in mapping prowess between differing reading levels. Two-thirds of the students indicated that they enjoyed the concept-mapping and would like to continue to both read and
map the text. The students also stated that they preferred to work in groups to perform the concept mapping tasks (Oliver, 2009).

(McCrudden, Schraw, & Lehman, 2009) researched the impact of adjunct displays and their role in learning informational text. Adjunct displays are common in informational texts. Research has been done to determine whether causal adjunct displays are helpful to the comprehension of informational text. Adjunct displays are used often to supplement and communicate text relationships (McCrudden, Schraw, & Lehman, 2009). They are used to both communicate independency and relationships between terms or concepts. This research was carried out with undergraduate students. The text was a 484 page text on how to achieve lift from an airplane. In their research after reading the text, they asked one group to study a causal diagram, one group to study a list, and the third group to reread the text. Participants were assigned randomly. The participants were then asked to perform three measures. The first was a short answer test in which they were asked to remember as many steps in the causal sequence they could. The second test measured the participant’s ability to transfer concepts and information into general principals. The third test was a multiple choice test to measure the ability to comprehend relationships of cause and effect. The summary of results yielded that those that used the displays in addition to reading the text, scored 27% greater than those who only reread the text. (McCrudden, Schraw, & Lehman, 2009).

**Text Structure**

The use of text structure can be seen throughout narrative reading selections. The sequencing, rhyming, sing-song approach is so prevalent in early readers that children begin to anticipate the sequencing and the rhyming based on the cover of the book and the illustrations.
inside. Building a library of expository books that are highly structured, and using explicit instructions when reading them to students, improves student expository text comprehension (Read, Reutzel, & Fawson, 2008). Children become good at the text they tend to see and read the most (Duke & Palincsar, 2004). It was once thought that exposing young students to too much informational text would hamper their reading ability. Conversely, properly mixing narrative text reading and expository text reading enhances a young reader’s ability to comprehend text (Kamil & Lane, 1997).

Role of Expository Text in Elementary Schools

Non-Narrative Text Structure

“Filling the Great Void, Why We Should Bring Nonfiction into the Early-Grade Classroom,” (Duke, Bennett-Armistead, & Roberts, 2003) used data from several different studies to help make an accurate appraisal of the role of expository text in elementary schools. Several studies outlined the lack of informational text in the classroom. This article summarized the research into three unsupported beliefs about informational text. Unsupported belief number one stated that young children cannot handle informational text. Unsupported belief number two stated young children do not like informational text, or at least prefer other forms of text. Unsupported belief number three stated young children should first learn to read and then read to
learn (Duke, Bennett-Armistead, Roberts, 2003). Each unsupported belief was disproven with several pieces of research. This article provided a good culmination of evidence to support the need of more instruction of informational text in the classroom.

It is apparent through reading research that schools fall short in the amount of informational text offerings that are presented in the primary grades. The evidence that exists in the articulated curriculum of schools suggests that information text is playing a role in our school. What is not known at this time is how much is the curriculum being followed on a daily basis in the classroom. Is the teacher strictly following the textbook or are they striving to address the shortcomings of the books with appropriately planned lessons? It can be seen through research that basal texts fall short addressing informational text objectives. I would suspect that unless a staff member purposes to address the shortcomings of existing curriculum, it is not being done.

Engaging Students

The Kids Can’t Read (Brunner, 2009); compiles instructional techniques to ensure students get the most out of expository text reading from the classroom. Engaging students becomes the primary function of the classroom teacher. Finding the link to prior knowledge to stimulate thought from your students is very important to knowledge acquisition (Brunner, 2009). Create a need to learn, make it novel, teach the meaning and how it connects to their lives, and tie your emotions to the topic, are important facets to instructing an expository text-based lesson (Tate, 2007). Teach the vocabulary first, students will understand the text much more fluently when reading. Be prepared by reading the text prior to instruction. Ask students to make predictions prior to reading the text. The anticipation of what the text might be saying
helps maintain student interest. Give students purpose by involving them on your instructional team. “We can do this together,” “We have been discussing important material together,” this helps students feel engaged with their instructor. Recognize the importance of time, reading aloud can take up too much time that is valuable to learn content. Helping students read more efficiently will help them learn more from the text. Teaching the structure of the text and the features that relate to their learning is important. When structure is understood and used to the students’ advantage, active learning will commence. Doing the lab work first can pique the interest of the student perhaps for the entire unit of study. Remaining positive throughout the lesson provides a powerful role model to the students. The attitude of the student during the lesson is largely responsible for their receptivity of the lesson (Brunner, 2009).

**Chapter III: Results and Analysis Relative to the Problem**

**Narrative versus Expository Text**

Researchers have looked at students’ discrepancy of knowledge of narrative and expository texts and found several factors that lead to that discrepancy. The lack of information texts present in the learning environment (Duke, 2000), leads to a lack of exposure to this text type. (Walker, Kragler, Martin, & Arnett, 2003) stated that early literacy development and informational text literacy happens when young children experience and explore texts. Without exposure to and experiences with informational texts, students do not learn how to use them and consequently learn information from them. Duke (2000) also found that during written language activities that informational texts were used only 3.6 minutes per day. Walker (2003) confirmed the Duke finding when interviewing a teacher from his study the teacher acknowledged that because of time constraints they did not have adequate time to spend on exploring informational texts. Narrative text instruction has been given center stage beginning in the home and carried
through to the first years of school. Walker (2003) points out that using whole group and small group instruction and teaching strategies to pick up patterns in the texts help students to take a genuine interest in reading informational text (Walker, Kragler, Martin, & Arnett, 2003).

Comprehension of narrative text has its roots in the decoding skills. Comprehension of informational text is generally influenced by the student’s knowledge of the world (Best, Floyd, & Mcdamara, 2008). They went on to determine that learning content was the key to being a successful informational text reader. (Gillam, Fargo, & Robertson, 2009) studied the impact of speaking or recalling informational text directly after it was read. They found that a student’s ability to comprehend informational text was greatly enhanced by paraphrasing what was just read. Paraphrasing helped the students recall important information taken from the informational text.

**Teaching Expository Text**

It is becoming more and more important to gather knowledge at a high rate. The earlier children learn to use informational text, the sooner they will be able to access large amounts of information (Caswell & Duke, 1998). Comparing and contrasting expository text is a good way to teach students how to comprehend expository text. Knowledge of content is the root of informational text (Williams, Stafford, Lauer, Hall, & Pollini, 2009). To access that content, students need to be taught text structure (Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005). Time spent on teaching text structure pays greater dividends than simply teaching vocabulary (Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005).

In addition to text structure instructional aids give a young student a visual cue to help them synthesize the textual information. Venn diagrams are one of the visual cues that help students compare and contrast information for meaning (Boon & Stagliano, 2009). Story
mapping and concept mapping are two more ways to see a visual representation of the text (Boon & Stagliano 2009; Oliver, 2009). Using text organizers were proven in each study to improve comprehension on informational text selections. (McCrudden, Schraw, & Lehman, 2009) showed that the use of displays also aids the comprehension of an information text selection. Organization of text information into a graphic display not only aids comprehension for the non-handicapped student but it is also seen as a great benefit for the handicapped as well (McCrudden, Schraw, & Lehman, 2009). Learning the structure of informational text comes with practice reading, appropriate instruction, and exposure to the informational text selections (Duke & Palincsar, 2004).

Role of Expository Text in Elementary Classrooms

Structured text is important for comprehension; it is much easier to comprehend well-structured text that presents information clearly and logically. It is much easier to understand than text that is out of order and missing key ingredients (Williams, Stafford, Lauer, Hall, & Pollini, 2009). We need to rid ourselves of the fallacy that informational text is too difficult to teach and to difficult for children to comprehend (Williams, 2005). Getting the structure in place to understand informational text is imperative for the later grades. The majority of content in the later grades and up into high school is taught through the use of informational text
Chapter IV: Conclusion

Recommendation

Children need, at a very early age, to be exposed to both narrative and informational text types. This is would involve educating families of the importance of exposing their children to both types of texts. A school can best accomplish this by jumping into the lives of the families of the school community when the child is in preschool. Relationships should be established with all “feeder” educational agencies that provide students to the school.

Schools need to do all they can do to assure that equal time is spent on all text types. By having on hand the informational texts that are age and content appropriate, the school stands a better chance of making a good connection to the student and their literary needs. Instructional staff needs to know that a problem exists regarding the frequency and depth of the exposure of the child to informational text. Without purposing to bridge the literacy exposure gap, it won’t get completed. Part of doing this is obligating classroom time to informational text instruction. It is very tempting to teach students in the genre they already know when they come to school. However, this would be detrimental to the child as they progress through the process of literacy. Knowledge of content becomes harder to acquire at the older grade levels if the students have not been adequately educated about informational text.

It is wrong to assume that the instructional staff is well-versed in teaching informational text. Time needs to be spent to determine where each staff members’ skills rest. Without a proper appraisal of skills, poor instruction is sure to go undetected. Staff training and preparation needs to be scrutinized. Proper time must be spent in the classroom on both informational text and narrative text. Students are never too young to begin to develop the love of reading both informational text and narrative text. Teachers need to be encouraged to use text
organizers with their students in both informational text and narrative texts. The act of writing about the subject being read helps synthesize the information and aids comprehension of the reading selection.
Areas for Further Research

I would like to do a mixed methods research project to really gather information about the current status of the knowledge about informational text instruction in both the home and the instructors in our schools. Information gathered from parents would reveal a lot about the readiness of students to understand informational text at school. There really was a void of information regarding preschool preparation of informational text other than to say parents read more narrative texts to their children.

I think there would be a quick upswing of informational text achievement if research was conducted to measure how much instruction is occurring in the classroom. Classroom observations specifically to help define frequency of informational text instruction would be measured weekly during the school year. Observations would include peer-to-peer observations to develop common concern for informational text instruction. Reflective journaling would take place on a daily basis. Peer interaction outside of lesson delivery would occur on a monthly basis in the form of grade-level focus groups. Classrooms need to be centers of information and should reflect this with displays and visible projects being performed throughout the school year. Parental attitudes toward reading informational text are important. Questioning the development of prior knowledge by introducing informational text to their children would be an important part of this project. The response from parents about the type of reading and the amount of reading they do with their children would be very telling. When parents work with their children it is no surprise that they come to school more prepared to read. Data collected from teachers assessing their daily behaviors regarding informational texts would be useful information to help staff members make an honest appraisal of their efforts. Proper preparation of the teacher as well as having the correct materials in place to teach informational text correctly would be measured.
Data collection would be from surveys and would be considered quantitative data. Surveys would be distributed before the project and after the initial six months of the project. Surveys would be a valuable resource to help diagnose the root of the problem of achievement on the MEAP reading informational section. Immediate action will be taken to act on the revelations revealed through the surveys.

Staff journaling and focus group notes would be considered qualitative data. Data will be gathered and analyzed with peers, administration, and shared with parent focus group through the school improvement team. Personal reflection as it relates to data collection and instruction in the classroom would be a key piece in the improvement of informational text instruction. Staff would look at methodology of lessons, successful content delivery, student prior knowledge gaps, and any ties to common success or common failure of the lesson.

Student journaling regarding information learned will be measured weekly. Compass computer learning tests would be used on a monthly basis with students K-5 performing them in the compass learning lab. Data would be viewed using Data Director focusing on the informational text measures. Data Director is good at revealing commonalities in success and failures by using demographic information filters. Gender, socio-economic factors, traditional family unit, and special education are among the factors that can be measured to determine necessary diagnosed adjustments.

A pilot survey would be sent to a parent, staff member, and a student via internet utilizing Zoomerang Survey Tool. Surveys would reveal useful data that will help define current status of attitudes toward reading of those surveyed and what their text reading tendencies are. There are certainly more questions that could be asked regarding informational text but the pilot would provide insights into how reading is viewed by parents and students. Specifically, the staff
survey would look at issues pertaining to informational text instruction. Data from the survey and the project would direct the professional development efforts of the school. If it was proven that by simply causing an issue by researching the topic scores on the MEAP went up, money would not need to be obligated in a large fashion to informational text improvement of instruction. If merely conducting the project does not exact positive change in the MEAP scores, money would need to be obligated to training the instructional staff more about teaching informational reading text. If the data shows that the materials that are being used are inadequate or too little in number, money would need to be allocated to meet the need and repair or bolster the system.

Conclusions

This paper shows the need to understand the reasons behind lower achievement on the MEAP test on the informational text portion of the test. The results at the fourth grade level indicate that students do not have as firm a grasp on the informational reading selection content as they do on the narrative reading selection content. There are many reasons why this is true. Lack of exposure to informational text either because it is not taught or there are no available materials are two leading factors. Using proper methodology and allocating time to teach text structure and proper techniques to develop comprehension skills in students takes time and expertise. Compare and contrast text, cause-effect relationships, concept mapping, story mapping, using related displays, and section paraphrasing are the methods that were discussed in this paper. Cooperative learning and discussing text that was read were shown to be powerful tools that help develop strong reading comprehension skills. Later grade success with content
acquisition is predicated on students mastering techniques to become life-long readers of informational text.
References


